

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) today called for the renewal of the federal State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and urged Congress to reject flawed legislation that opens the program to illegal aliens at the expense of U.S. taxpayers and Florida's seniors.

"I strongly support the SCHIP program as a way to provide health care to low-income kids," said Buchanan. "But I oppose raising taxes and cutting Medicare benefits. Today's legislation is fiscally irresponsible and senior unfriendly. Congress should reject any legislation that forces members of Congress to choose between our kids and our seniors."

The House of Representatives today is debating H.R. 3162, the "Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act of 2007." Buchanan is opposed final passage of this flawed bill and supports instead an alternative version that would extended the program without the onerous provisions.

In an editorial entitled Health care scam, the Bradenton Herald said the bill is "fiscally irresponsible" and puts forth cuts to the popular Medicare Advantage program. According to the paper these cuts would force seniors, "back into Medicare with its fees and co-pays that low-income retirees can't afford." Under the bill, seniors residing in Florida's 13th District who are enrolled in the Medicare Advantage program would see \$27 million in benefit cuts per year.

In addition, the bill makes harmful cuts in Medicare for skilled nursing facilities, rehabilitation facilities, and long term care hospitals, and reduces Medicare payments for oxygen, home health and the end stage renal disease programs. "These cuts to Medicare will result in higher co-pays, a loss of health benefits, less quality and choice of programs and fewer choices among doctors for thousands of area seniors," Buchanan said.

The Herald also noted that the bill would expand SCHIP to "cover families earning four times the poverty rate, or about \$82,000 a year."

Finally, H.R. 3162 opens the door for SCHIP and Medicaid benefits for illegal immigrants by eliminating the requirement that people applying for benefits show proof of citizenship or

nationality. “Just a huge loophole,” Buchanan added.

Buchanan supports alternative legislation that would provide a modest increase in funding to the SCHIP program without raising taxes, cutting Medicare benefits or providing new benefits for illegal immigrants.

“We can come together and produce a bill that provides health care coverage to kids in low-income families without hurting our seniors, working families, and taxpayers. Let’s go back to the drawing board and get it done.”